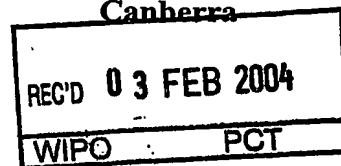




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PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION

Applicant:

UNITAB LIMITED
A.C.N. 085 691 738

Invention Title:

A METHOD OF AWARDING A PRIZE IN A GAMING SYSTEM

The invention is described in the following statement:

A METHOD OF AWARDING A PRIZE IN A GAMING SYSTEM

The present invention relates to gaming systems and is particularly relevant to electronic gaming machines.

5 Gaming machines are well known in the gaming industry. A typical electronic gaming machine awards a jackpot to a player if the turnover on that machine reaches a preset level.

To add an additional degree of interest to
10 electronic gaming machines a number of machines may be linked together so that a greater jackpot prize can be offered.

Typically in such circumstances external jackpot triggering devices are involved which receive information
15 from each electronic gaming machine and based on predetermined criteria issue a jackpot to an EGM which results in an incremented value stored by the jackpot triggering device equaling a preset value.

The present invention is aimed at providing an
20 additional element of interest to a person playing a gaming system such as that which incorporates an EGM.

According to the present invention there is provided a display device for a gaming system comprising a receiver for receiving a signal derived from a gaming
25 console, a game play means for providing at least one game and a display for displaying the game, wherein the game play means is configured to play the at least one game when the signal is received by the receiver.

Preferably the at least one game includes a game
30 of chance.

The game play means may be configured to display one or more feature game play options on the display, whereby a player can choose a feature game to play.

The game play means preferably includes game play
35 options in the form of physical control components of the display device such as switches, buttons, joy sticks, touch sensors etc.

The game play means may provide game play icons on the display which when touched activate one game.

The receiver may be adapted to receive a jackpot trigger signal from a jackpot trigger device.

5 The display device is preferably configured to receive the signal from a jackpot trigger device.

The jackpot trigger device may be external to the display device and/or to the gaming console.

10 Preferably the gaming console includes electronic gaming machines or any other gaming device or system.

Preferably the jackpot trigger device is part of a central controller external to the display device and any gaming consoles.

15 It is possible for the jackpot trigger device to be located inside the gaming console.

The jackpot trigger device may be adapted to receive a plurality of different signals which are able to be transferred to the display device to activate different games or game options.

20 Preferably the display device includes mounting means for mounting to a gaming console.

The display device may be configured to be inclined forwardly from above a gaming console.

25 Preferably the display device is configured to be unable to receive coins or other forms of currency including notes.

It is preferred that the display device can only be activated by a signal received from the jackpot trigger device.

30 Preferably the display device is configured with no switches/buttons.

The display device may be automatically operated upon receipt of the signal.

35 Preferably the game play means excludes inline icons on the display.

The game play means may provide a feature game which is in addition to that provided by a gaming console

to which it is connected/mounted.

Preferably the feature game provided includes a pick a box game in which a plurality of icons are produced representing boxes which must be opened to reveal a prize.

5 It is preferred that the boxes can only be opened by a player operating a control means such as a touch screen sensor.

The game play means may be adapted to send a selection signal to a transmitter of the display device
10 when a player selects one option, whereby the transmitter transmits the selection signal to a jackpot controller which determines if a prize is awarded to the player of the feature game and sends back a jackpot signal to the display device.

15 Preferably the game play means provides a prize awarded graphical display, if the receiver receives the jackpot signal from the jackpot controller.

It is preferred that the jackpot controller includes the jackpot trigger device.

20 According to another aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of awarding a prize in a gaming system including at least one game controller and at least one display device having a receiver for receiving a trigger signal derived at least in part from
25 the at least one game controller, a game play means for providing at least one game and a display for displaying the game, transmitting the signal from the at least one game controller to the receiver, operating the game play means to play a game and displaying an outcome of the game
30 on the display.

It is preferred that the method includes providing a jackpot trigger means, transmitting a data signal from at least one of the game controllers to the jackpot trigger and transmitting the trigger signal to the
35 receiver.

The jackpot trigger means may comprise a jackpot trigger device interposed between the/each game controller

and the/each display device.

Alternatively the jackpot trigger means is located in the display device.

It is preferred that the method includes
5 providing a central controller for receiving the data signals from each game controller, processing the data signals and transmitting a trigger signal to one or more display devices.

Preferably the method includes transmitting a
10 trigger signal to one display device if a predetermined data signal is received from one game controller.

It is preferred that the predetermined data signal includes a signal representing a predetermined event occurring on the game controller. This may include
15 jackpot issuing, each time the game controller is played, a predetermined amount of money being bet on the game controller.

Preferably there is provided a central control which incorporates the jackpot trigger device/jackpot
20 trigger means and transmits the trigger signal from the jackpot trigger device.

The trigger signal may be transmitted if the central controller receives data signals that have a total value equal to or greater than a trigger value randomly
25 determined by the central controller.

The method may include display a plurality of game options on the display.

It is preferred that the method includes offering different games for a player to select to play if the
30 receiver receives a trigger signal.

The method may include offering a player a plurality of choices each having a different outcome which is unknown to the player.

The plurality of choices may correspond to a pick
35 a box game where the player must pick a box by touching the screen and the game player means operates to display a prize in the box which is picked.

The game player means may also reveal the prize behind each of the boxes which are not picked after the first box is picked.

5 Preferably the method includes providing at least one icon to be selected by a player to initiate a feature game provided by the game player means.

The display device may include touch sensors on the display.

10 The touch sensors may correspond to icons of the game offered by the game player means and displayed on the display.

The display device may be configured to transmit a selection signal to the central controller corresponding to a selection may by a player selecting a game option.

15 The central controller may be configured to store a trigger value to issue a jackpot signal to the display device if the trigger value corresponds to a value determined from a random selection.

20 It is preferred that the central controller determines if a predetermined event has occurred and transmits the trigger signal to the receiver.

The central controller preferably calculates prize values to be awarded by the display device.

25 The game player means preferably randomly provides a group of options which each conceal a prize of a different value.

The display device may offer games to a player which have prizes awarded according to criteria governing any existing EGMS.

30 According to another aspect of the present invention there is provided a gaming system which includes at least one game controller and at least one display device having one or more of the features previously recited as preferable features and a central controller
35 for receiving signals from the or each game controller and transmitting a trigger signal to activate a game player means of the display device.

It is preferred that according to another aspect of the present invention there is provided a computer program for implementing any one of the methods previously described.

5 The words "comprising, having, including" should be interpreted in an inclusive sense, meaning that additional features may also be added.

 A preferred embodiment of the present invention will now be described by way of example only with
10 reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

 Figure 1 shows a schematic diagram of a gaming system according to one embodiment of the invention;

 Figure 2 shows a schematic diagram of an
15 interactive jackpot display according to one embodiment;
and

 Figure 3 shows a side view of the display shown in Figure 2.

 As shown in the figures an interactive jackpot display (IJD) device 10 has a window 11 with an electronic
20 display. For convenience the display shows five box shaped icons 12 which represent options available to a person playing an EGM.

 The gaming system of the preferred embodiment consists of a number of interactive jackpot displays 10
25 which are mounted to the top of an existing EGM 13 as shown in Figure 1.

 Each EGM 13 is connected to a central controller provided at a remote location from the EGMs. The site controller is connected to electronic circuitry within
30 each EGM to pick up data which indicates certain events occurring within the EGM. The central controller 14 continually monitors this data until an event occurs, typically within an EGM, which the central controller determines justifies the awarding of a prize or an
35 opportunity to play a feature game which is provided on the interactive jackpot display 10.

 In its simplest form the interactive jackpot

display offers the game player a game of pick a box. As shown in Figure 2 five boxes may be provided and the IJD will invite the player to choose one of the boxes. A choice may be made by simply touching one of the boxes on the screen so that touch sensors behind the screen will be able to sense which box has been touched and operate controlling software of the IJD to reveal the contents of the box. Thus one of the boxes may reveal a prize such as a jackpot while the other boxes might reveal a message indicating no prize has been won. Furthermore to ensure that the game player believes there is an opportunity of picking the right box the other boxes can subsequently be opened automatically by the controlling software to reveal in which box the prize was located.

The pick a box game described above may include any number of boxes.

The method of determining the triggering event for awarding a feature game will be dependent upon which particular embodiment in which the IJD is used. Some examples of different triggering options include:

i. An embodiment in which the EGM is connected to a central controller which monitors a jackpot signal occurring within the EGM, the central controller then sends a trigger signal to the IJD of that EGM and the game player is able to play the feature game as previously described.

ii. The central controller 14 may be connected to an EGM to receive a signal from the EGM representing an event which occurs in the EGM corresponding to a minor prize above a certain value.

iii. The central controller may receive progressive turnover data from each EGM through a site controller 15 which sends this data to a jackpot trigger device 16. The jackpot trigger device 16 stores an accumulative total value of turnover for each machine and compares this total value with a jackpot prize value (trigger value) determined by a jackpot prize calculator

17. If the total accumulated value is equal to or greater than the trigger value for the jackpot prize a trigger signal is transmitted from the central controller to the display device to enable a player to play a feature game.

5 iv. The central controller may effectively be removed and replaced by an onboard controller constituting part of the IJD. In this way the IJD is dedicated solely to results occurring within the EGM to which it is attached. A feature game may be awarded based on any of
10 the options provided in paragraphs 1 to 3 as well as other options not specifically stated.

 v. A feature game may be triggered on an IJD based purely on a random occurrence within the EGM.

15 vi. A feature game may be triggered in the IJD at a preset or random time.

 The feature game which is offered by the IJD is preferably controlled by software within the IJD. Even though this software is responsible for providing the feature game and/or the graphical display icons the
20 triggering mechanism for offering a prize as a result of playing the feature game can be determined either within the IJD or remotely by a remotely located central controller. Thus a person will play the feature game and this will result in a signal being transmitted to the
25 central controller which will be make a decision on whether the feature game will result in a prize being awarded to the player. The decision to award a prize may be separate from the action of awarding the player the feature game in the first place. Thus as an example if
30 the central controller receives a signal from an EGM that results in an accumulated value equaling a trigger value determined by the central controller the trigger signal sent to the IJD will result in the player being able to play the feature game. If the feature game offers the
35 player a number of options such as the option of picking a box in a pick a box game, the choice made by the player may be fed back to the central controller for the central

controller to determine whether the right box was picked to enable a prize to be awarded. The central controller could have a pseudo random number generator which will determine which of the boxes will have the prize and
5 compare this with the number of the box which is chosen. Alternatively the awarding of a prize after the feature game may be dependent upon a second trigger value associated with another event occurring within the central controller. This event may correspond to a value
10 dependent on turnover of the EGM.

If a number of EGMS are linked together to the central controller the feature game may be offered to only the player that the central controller has selected as a winner.

15 According to one embodiment the prize to be won and the winner may be determined by the central controller such that the players action will not alter the resulting prize. Therefore in the pick a box type game, the player may select one of the boxes to open and when the box is
20 opened it will reveal the prize won. The system may be implemented in such a way that whichever box is opened it will always display the prize already selected. When the other boxes are opened to reveal what the player could have won, other outcomes that could have occurred, but
25 were known not to have occurred in this case are displayed.

According to another embodiment the prize may genuinely be determined by the player's selection. For example, a pick a box game having n boxes may genuinely
30 have n possible outcomes depending upon which box is selected by the player. The IJD may itself be responsible for calculating the prize values associated with each box. Alternatively the central controller may use its JTD, may calculate the prize values and the boxes to which they are
35 allocated and send appropriate signals to the IJD. The central controller would then only reveal the prize values and the boxes to which they are allocated after being

notified by the IJD of the player's selection. This allows an insecure IJD to be used with a secure central controller to provide an overall prize awarding system that is secure (a player cannot obtain prior knowledge of which box to pick without access to the internal state of the central controller).

Although the embodiment described above has been based on a pick a box concept the invention contemplates other feature games.

According to another embodiment a double up game may be provided in which the winning player is able to decide to accept the prize or gamble it (heads or tails) to double the prize value.

The double up game may allow a portion of the prize to be left ungambled, e.g. the prize of \$20, gamble \$10 and win, giving \$30 total, or lose giving \$10 total.

The double up game may allow repeated gambles. A limitation may be placed on the maximum number of gambles and/or the value accumulated.

The double up game may allow the player to select (as a single play) whether to double, quadruple, etc. the prize with the outcome being equivalent to the corresponding number of successive double or nothing plays.

The prize multiplication and its inverse (the probability of a win), need not be prize multiply equals two, $p = \frac{1}{2}$, other net result of one multiplier and probability can be used, e.g. $X = 4$, $p = \frac{1}{4}$.

The prize multiplication may be player selectable.

Other games covered include other game themes such as pick a horse instead of pick a box. Concepts may be combined or extended, e.g. pick a horse may have horses with different form (probability of win) and corresponding odds. Different bet types may be allowed, prizes awarded for a place etc. In addition games which require ongoing interaction such as navigating down a river or along a

forking path to get to a destination may be offered.

With regard to the IJD as a physical structure it is preferred that this is angled forwardly from above the EGM to allow a player to easily make a selection in a
5 feature game by merely touching a screen icon.

It may be possible to make the IJD pivotable on a mount structure connected to the EGM. This would allow further tilting of the display screen. Alternatively physical control components such as buttons or a joystick
10 may be provided as part of the IJD.

It is to be understood that, if any prior art publication is referred to herein, such reference does not constitute an admission that the publication forms a part of the common general knowledge in the art, in Australia
15 or in any other country.

Variations and modifications can be made in respect of the invention described above and defined in the following statement of claim:

- 5 1. A display device for a gaming system
comprising a receiver for receiving a signal derived from
a gaming console, a game play means for providing at least
one game and a display for displaying the game, wherein
the game play means is configured to play the at least one
game when the signal is received by the receiver.

10

Dated this 11th day of April 2003

UNITAB LIMITED

By their Patent Attorneys

GRIFFITH HACK

- 15 Fellows Institute of Patent and
Trade Mark Attorneys of Australia

Figure 1

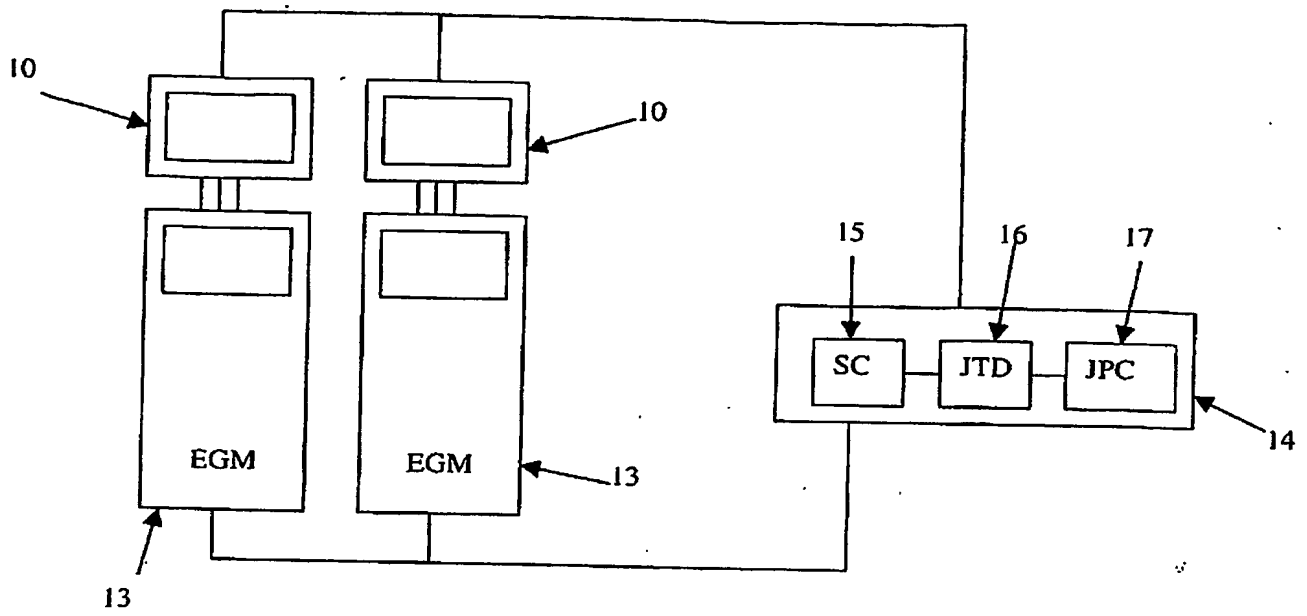


Figure 2

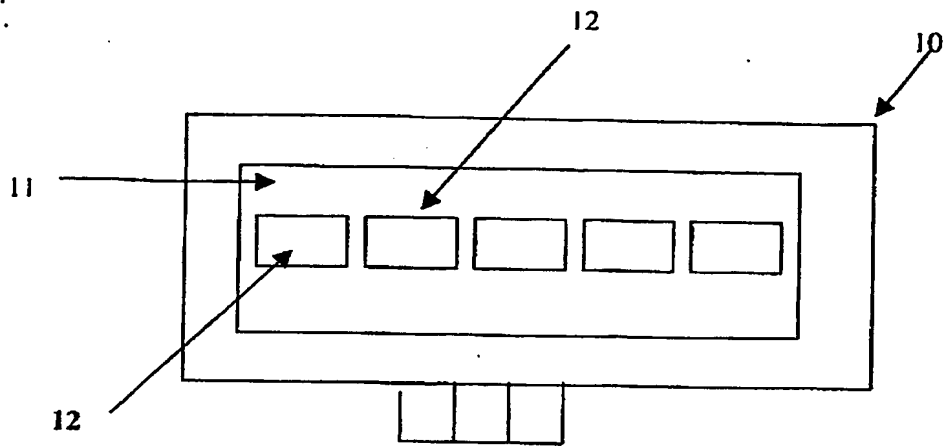
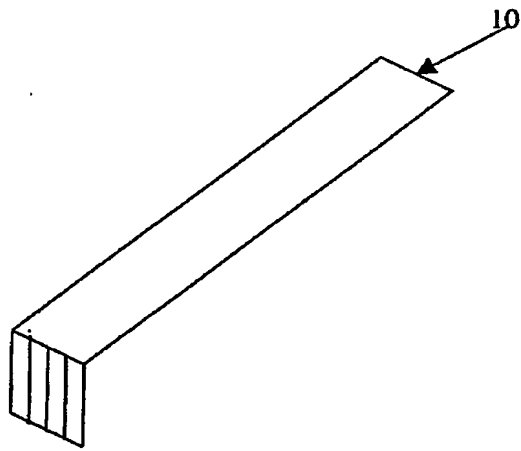


Figure 3



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